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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2608

April 30, 1993

AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE -- At a USDA news conference Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced a series of USDA issues forums, called "Agenda for the Future." The first will be on hunger in America. Each forum will be followed with regional meetings held throughout the nation. Other issues to be addressed are food safety, meat and poultry inspection, USDA reorganization and program simplification, farm income, rural America, agricultural trade and exports, and the environment. Congressman Tony Hall (3rd, D-OH) reviewed developments in support of focusing efforts on conquering hunger, and commented on his fast to bring attention to the hunger issue.

USDA photo by Byron Schumaker



FEWER ACRES IN 1993 -- Farmers indicate that acreage for seven program crops and oilseeds will total 256 million acres, down 4.5 million from last year's planted area. Coarse grains are expected to be down five percent from last year, corn four percent lower, rice may drop two percent, and wheat and soybeans about the same acreage. The reduced acreage is attributed to lower prices, fewer acres being double cropped, and additional land being entered into the Conservation Reserve Program. **Contact: Cathy Greene (202) 219-0313.**

FOOD FARM VALUE -- The farm value of a dollar spent for food in 1992 was 22 cents. Thirty-five cents of every dollar, the largest portion, went for food marketing labor costs. The third largest portion of the food dollar, eight cents, was spent on packaging. All other items were less than 5 cents each. The Consumer Price Index of food prices show an increase of 1.2 percent above those in 1991, the smallest increase since 1967. A variety of factors kept food price increases small, including lower inflation, slow growth in consumers' real income and low consumer confidence. Food spending was down particularly for high-value, high-priced products and restaurant meals. **Contact: Denis Dunham (202) 219-0870.**

RICE PLANTINGS DOWN, EXPORTS UP -- 1993 estimated U.S. rice plantings total 3.1 million acres, down 1.5 percent from actual plantings last year. Heavy rainfall in the southern rice-growing area in April got planting off to a slow start, and market prices are less favorable than a year ago. Large supplies and lower international prices are putting heavy pressure on U.S. prices. Exports of U.S. rice are expected to be 14 percent higher than last year's 76 million cwt, boosting the U.S. share of world rice trade to 17 percent this year. Stiff competition to U.S. rice is expected from Asian exporters, especially Thailand where rice is entering world markets at a significant discount to U.S. prices. **Contact: Janet Livezey (202) 219-0840.**

ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE PLAINS -- The future of the rural Great Plains depends largely on the region's ability to attract other industries to add to its current economic base. The USDA publication "Rural Development Perspectives," says the potential for new businesses in the Plains may well be greatest in agriculture-related industries that add value to basic farm products, such as meat processing, packaging, and marketing. Increased economic diversity is the greatest challenge for the Plains economy, particularly in nonmetro communities. The region's relatively high education level may be the key to attaining such diversity. **Contact: Fred Hines (202) 219-0525.**

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL -- Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service are studying a naturally flightless wasp that attacks moths of the cotton bollworm and tobacco budworm. The flightless characteristic, if transferred to other natural enemies of crop pests, could keep beneficial insects in areas where they are placed. The researchers are locating the gene responsible for the flightless trait. The next step is to move it into other promising parasites of crop pests. Cotton bollworms and tobacco budworms cause billions of dollars of damage to more than 100 crops. The biological control could help reduce use of chemicals to control the pests. **Contact: William Steiner (314) 875-5361.**

SUNFLOWERSEED -- In response to recent higher prices, farmers are expected to plant nearly 2 and a half million acres to sunflowers this year, compared to 2.2 million acres last year. In the 1992/93 marketing year 2.3 billion pounds of sunflowerseed will be processed to meet the growing demand for sunflower oil exports, which are estimated to total 558 million pounds this year. The action will draw down stocks and boost prices 12 percent above a year ago. **Contact: Georgo Douvelis (202) 219-0840.**

LARGE-SCALE FARMS -- The total number of farms in the United States declined during 1982-87, the most recent period for which there are statistics, continuing a long-term trend toward fewer farms. But large-scale farms, those with annual product sales of \$500,000 or more, increased during the period. Large-scale farms account for only 1.5 percent of all farms, but they control 13 percent of all farmland, and generate 38 percent of all product sales at the average rate of \$414 per acre compared with \$141 per acre for all farms. The 31,023 large-scale farms operate an average of 3,921 acres, compared with 462 acres for all farms. Large-scale farms received only 9 percent of total direct government payments to farmers, but they usually received a larger average payment, \$62,587 as compared to \$13,800 for all farms. The publication "Characteristics of Large Scale Farms, 1987," is available at 1-800-999-6779. **Contact: Donn Reimund (202) 219-0522.**

PLANT RESEARCH BUILDING -- Secretary Espy broke ground at ceremonies for a new building at the Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, MD. The \$10 million structure will house under one roof USDA's three major horticultural research laboratories. It is the first building to be built at the center in over 20 years. **Contact: Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623.**

WE'VE FOUND THE NORM -- A new hard red spring wheat variety resists bending and breaking as grain-laden heads mature. Developed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service and scientists at the University of Minnesota, the new variety, Norm, produces stiffer stalks that will allow farmers to eliminate the practice of using growth regulating chemicals to keep stalks from growing so tall they are susceptible to breakage. In tests Norm has improved grain production and has good disease resistance. It will be ready for large scale planting in 1994. **Contact: Robert Busch (612) 625-1975.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1873 -- In this edition **Jim Henry** travels to a unique research facility and talks with a number of experts who say people are never too old to exercise. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1355 -- Year of the cow; Somalia food outlook improving; hunger forum; edible petals; edible coatings. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1865 -- USDA News Highlights; massive agricultural health study; tobacco research; Asian beetle could threaten U.S. crops; naturally fertile fields. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1618 -- "Carbo-loading" & the weekend warrior; body shape, comparing apples and pears; aquaculture & hydroponics; "constructed" wetlands; plant facility ground breaking. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Monday, May 3, horticultural exports; Tuesday, May 4, weekly weather & crop outlook, cotton and wool update; Tuesday, May 11, U.S. crop production, world ag supply and demand; Wednesday, May 12, world ag/grain production, world cotton situation, world oilseed situation; Thursday, May 13, ag resources (cropland & water); Friday, May 14, livestock outlook, milk production. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports on the national parasite collection in Beltsville, MD.

ACTUALITIES -- Secretary of Agriculture **Mike Espy** on hunger in America, and rural development; USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on weather and crop progress; USDA economist **Janet Livezey** on the rice situation; USDA economist **Sara Short** on the dairy outlook; USDA economist **Scott Sanford** on oil crops.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **DeBoria Janifer** reports on the nutritional value of purslane; **Pat O'Leary** reports on the Palmer drought index; **Lynn Wyvill** reports on exercise and aging.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update** with anchors **Eric Parsons** and **Lori Spiczka**. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

*Available on Satellite **Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.***

OFFMIKE

2,000 POUNDS...of agricultural chemicals and containers were collected as a result of Agricultural Clean Sweep, says **Louis Rosandick** (WFHR, Wisconsin Rapids, WI). Louis worked with the Adams County Extension office to promote the project. Live broadcasts were made from the collection point. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture's clean sweep team packaged the material for disposal. One farmer said he got rid of containers that had been on his farm for over 40 years.

ESTABLISHING...an Agricultural Area is being undertaken by producers in the region served by **Mike Buchanan** (KBIZ, Ottumwa, IA). The designation prevents nuisance lawsuits by those locating near a farm. The area must be at least 500 contiguous acres. Farmers are seeking a public hearing on the matter and will approach the Wapalo County board of supervisors for the designation. Mike says there are 41 agricultural areas in Iowa. Mike says the other big issue receiving lots of coverage is the weather. Producers are waiting for the fields to dry, but daily rains don't help.

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Radio-TV Division
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WE'RE UP TO OUR KNEES IN MUD...says **Charles Blake** (WIKY, Evansville, IN). Corn planting that is usually completed by mid-April will likely be delayed to mid-May. With arrival of normal weather the late planting date shouldn't interfere with harvest this fall in his area. Field ponding is stressing wheat, and muddy conditions are preventing application of nitrogen. Charlie says wheat doesn't like wet feet.

AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY...is doing fine in this wet weather, says **Ray Forcier** (KWKH, Shreveport, LA), and rice is doing OK, but cotton planting is running behind schedule and more rain is forecast. Ray says producers have until mid-May to get the cotton crop in.

MOVED...**Warren Baker** (WNCT, Greenville, NC) to the audiovisual staff of the Pitt County Memorial Hospital, Greenville, **Tom Tyson** is doing farm programming at the station. **Chad Miller** (KART, Twin Falls, ID) resigned, **Susan Stogner** is airing farm broadcast information. **Chris Blaine** (KNOX, Grand Forks, ND) resigned, **Dick Beardsley** airing agricultural news.

VIC POWELL 
Chief, Radio & TV Division